ON SUICIDE

THE question as to whether a man has the right to kill himself is incorrectly put. There can be no question as to right. If he can, he has the right. I think that the possibility of killing oneself is a safety-valve. With this possibility a man has no right (here the expression "to have right" is in place) to say that life is intolerable to him. It is impossible for me to live, so I will kill myself, and then there will be no one to complain of the intolerableness of life. Man is given the opportunity to kill himself, and so he can (has the right to) kill himself, and he continually makes use of it, killing himself in duels, in war, by means of dissipation, whiskey, tobacco, opium, and so forth. The question can be only as to whether it is rational and moral (the rational and the moral always coincide) to kill oneself.

No, it is not rational; it is just as irrational as to cut off the suckers of a plant which you want to kill: the plant will not perish, but will only grow irregularly.

Life is not destructible, — it is outside time and space, and so death can only change the form, cut off its manifestation in this life. And having cut it off in this world, I, in the first place, do not know whether its manifestation in another world will be more agreeable to me, and, in the second place, I deprive myself of the possibility of learning and acquiring for my ego everything which it could acquire in this world. Besides, and above all else, it is irrational, because, interrupting my life, — because it seems disagreeable to me, — I only show that I have a

perverse conception of the destiny of this life, by assuming that its destiny is my enjoyment, whereas its destiny is, on the one hand, personal perfection, on the other, a ministration to that work which is accomplished by the whole life of the world. For the same reason suicide is immoral: life is given to man in its entirety, and he is given the possibility of living to a natural death, only on condition of his ministration to the life of the world, and he, making use of life only to the extent to which it is agreeable to him, refuses to serve the world with it, the moment it becomes disagreeable to him, whereas, in all probability, this ministration began at the very moment when life became unpleasant. Every work at first appears unpleasant.

In Óptin Cloister a paralyzed monk, who had the use of only his left arm, lay for more than thirty years on the floor. The doctors said that he must suffer very much, but he not only did not complain of his condition, but constantly making the sign of the cross, looking at the images, and smiling, expressed his gratefulness to God and joy at that spark of life which was glowing within him. Tens of thousands of visitors saw him, and it is hard to imagine all the good which spread over the world from this man, who was deprived of every possibility of work. No doubt this man did more good than thousands and thousands of healthy people, who imagine that they are serving the world in various institutions.

So long as there is life in man, he can perfect himself and serve the world. But he can serve the world only by perfecting himself, and he can perfect himself only by serving the world.

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